

James M. Fortier • Writer/Producer/Director/DP/Editor/Dedicated Historian

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[Turtle-Island.com](http://Turtle-Island.com) [Searching for Sequoyah](#) [Gifts from the Elders](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Facebook](#) [Vimeo](#)

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## Experience

- 1995-2026: Owner, Turtle Island Productions. Providing Director of Photography and video production services including location scouting, budgeting, crewing, custom production packages and equipment rentals, crew supervision, production management, logistics, and payroll. Live event camera operator, and D.P. for recent corporate video productions for Creative Video Services, Gilead Sciences, BioMarin, Exelixis, the Computer History Museum, and others.
- 1999-2021: Emmy award winning Writer, Producer, and Director for independent and PBS documentaries. Sundance Film Festival Alum, 2001.
- 2005-2020: Freelance editor using Adobe Premiere Suite. Clients included Intuit, Intel, Walmart Labs, Brocade and Moving Arts Communications among others.
- 2003-2017: Contract Creative Director, Naqmayam Communications, California Indian-owned public relations & marketing company. <http://www.naqcom.com>.
- 1989-1995: San Francisco based Director of Photography, Lighting Director, and Camera Operator. Productions for a variety of broadcast, cable, corporate, documentary, and commercial clients. Productions include multi-camera live teleconferences, broadcasts, webcasts, and live events; corporate marketing and product videos, internal communications, and training videos; blue/green screen for the web, video games, and DVD interactive programs for education, entertainment and corporate communications; as well as sports specials, documentaries and commercials. Productions for: NBC, CBS, ABC, TBS, CBC, PBS, Knowledge TV, Sci-Fi Channel, E-Channel, SkyTV, Discovery Channel, Intuit, Cisco, Visa, Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Oracle, Adobe, SGI, Yahoo, Sun, Autodesk, National Geographic, and others.
- 1988-1989: Production Manager/Director of Photography, Breene Kerr Productions, Mt. View, CA. Responsible for coordinating production personnel, Lighting Director for live teleconferences, sound stage and location productions. Productions for Apple Computer, Intel, 3Com, Fujitsu, Hewlett-Packard, Amdahl, and many others.
- 1987-1988: Grip/Gaffer on a freelance basis for a variety of corporate and educational productions in Chicago for Group Cogito and University of Illinois at Chicago.
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## Education

- 1984-86 San Francisco State University. B.A. Radio & Television Arts
- 1983-84 Foothill College, Los Altos, CA. Focus on broadcast radio news at KFJC College radio.
- 1980-83 College of DuPage, Glen Ellyn, IL. A.A. Media Arts
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## Credits

Producer/Director/Writer/Director of Photography/Editor

***Searching for Sequoyah*** - A one hour documentary funded primarily by Vision Maker Media for CPB/PBS, distributed through American Public Television in 2021. Responsibilities included writing proposals, treatments, and grants. Secured 3 funding agreements through Vision Maker Media totaling

more than \$155,000 (US). As Producer, responsible for managing all budgets, contracts, quarterly reports, bookkeeping and financial reports, logistics, travel, hiring and related tasks while directing, filming, and coordinating all aspects of the field production trips to the Eastern Band of Cherokee, NC, The Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, the Kickapoo Nation in Oklahoma, and in Zaragoza, Mexico. Also collaborated with hired Native American specialists for composing original music and theme song, animators and more. Film was completed under-budget and on time and premiered in November 2021 with a 90% PBS carriage score across the US.

Location Director/DP

***Indian Country Diaries- Spiral of Fire*** - A 90-minute documentary feature for Native American Public Telecommunications and PBS. National PBS premiered in November 2006.

Writer/Associate/Producer/ Director of Photography

***Waasa-Inaabidaa: We Look In All Directions*** - WDSE-TV, Duluth, MN. A PBS six-part (six-hour) documentary series, and companion website originally at [www.ojibwe.org](http://www.ojibwe.org), now at [www.ojibwehistory.com](http://www.ojibwehistory.com), covering 500+ years of history and culture of 19 Ojibwe tribes in three states, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. National PBS Premiere, 2002. APTN (Canada) premiere, November 2003.

Writer/Director/Director of Photography

***Alcatraz Is Not an Island*** - Documentary feature about the 1969-71 American Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island. Official selection 2001 Sundance Film Festival. Premiered on PBS nationally in November 2002. Received ITVS completion funding award.

Writer/Producer/Director/Director of Photography

***Gifts From the Elders*** - 60 Minute documentary, filmed with community input, heavy focus on youth and elders from two Ojibway reserves in Ontario, Canada; Batchewana and Pic River First Nations. American Indian Film Festival, 2013, LA Skins Film Festival, 2013. PBS broadcast 2013, WDSE-8 PBS Duluth, MN. *Gifts from the Elders* follows five Anishinaabe youth on a summer research project with their Elders, whose stories guide them on a journey back to preceding generations that lived a healthy lifestyle off of the land. Their stories chronicle the devastating impact that environmental and cultural dispossession had on the flow of knowledge from Elders to youth, and ultimately on the health of their people. As their summer comes to an end, the youth emerge with “gifts” of knowledge and teachings from their Elders, inspiring a renewed determination to forge a hopeful and healthy future for the next generation. [www.giftsfromtheelders.ca](http://www.giftsfromtheelders.ca).

***Paths of Renewal*** - A Decade of Transformation in Native Community Development: A 30-minute informational video for the First Nations Oweesta Corporation, a Native American non-profit. Premiered 2010 American Indian Film Festival.

***Bad Sugar*** - A 30-minute episode of the national PBS series *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* Produced in cooperation with the Pima and Tohono O’odham tribes of Arizona, exploring the link between historical and social determinants and Type Two Diabetes. Premiered nationally on PBS in the spring of 2008.

***Gathering Together*** - One hour documentary sequel to *Pulling Together* for the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. Premiered at the AIFF, November of 2007.

***Pulling Together*** - Feature-length verité style documentary with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, premiered at the Palm Springs Native American Film Festival, 2005.

***Voices for the Land*** - 30-minute Documentary for WDSE-TV, PBS, Duluth, Minnesota. Broadcast premiere Nov. 2000.

***Waswagoning Ojibwe Dance Theater***: Marketing and promotional video.

Associate Producer/Director of Photography

***Green Green Water*** - Documentary feature chronicles the impact of past, present, and future Hydroelectric dams on several Northern Manitoba Cree communities. PBS premiere fall of 2007.

Co-Producer/Director/Director of Photography

***Playing Pastime: American Indians, Softball, and Survival*** - Documentary short. ITVS Diversity Development Fund and All Roads Seed grant from National Geographic.

Event Producer/Director

30th Anniversary of Alcatraz Occupation, 1999: A musical and cultural celebration held on Alcatraz Island. Major press, radio, and TV coverage. Worked with American Indian celebrities such as John Trudell, Floyd Red Crow Westerman, and Dennis Banks, among others.

Director of Photography

***Nehiyawetan: Let's Speak Cree*** - Three seasons for children's Cree language series. Premiered on APTN Fall of 2008. Producer/Director was Métis-Cree filmmaker Loretta Todd.

***Waasa-Inaabidaa - We Look in All Directions*** - WDSE-TV, PBS Duluth, Native American documentary.

***The Healing Blanket*** - Health series for the Wabano Center for Aboriginal Health, Ottawa, 2004.

***We Hold the Rock*** - Exhibit video for the National Park Service, Alcatraz Island.

***Great Museums*** - National PBS series, shot in HDTV, PBS Premiere Fall, 2003.

***Looks Into the Night*** - Award winning Native American dramatic short starring Tantoo Cardinal. Premiered on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, (Nationwide) Canada.

***Stay Tuned*** - Pilot for VH1 music documentary series.

***Don't Be a Target*** - Nationally broadcast special with Dennis Franz.

***In America*** - Documentary series on immigration, produced by Echo Pictures, for the International Channel. Silver Telly Award winner.

***History of the Presidio*** - Documentary for the Golden Gate National Parks and Recreation.

Director of Photography for hundreds of corporate, broadcast, and cable productions, drama, live broadcasts, corporate identity, and blue/green screen productions

D.P. 2nd Unit

***Today Is A Good Day: Remembering Chief Dan George*** - CBC documentary feature. Premiered on CBC.

***America Drinks*** - The History Channel.

**50x2000** - German Television documentary shot in 16x9 digital wide screen.

L.D./Cameraman

NBC's Super Bowl XXVII Special with Dick Enberg.

CBS's College Bowl Preview and College Basketball Preview shows with Pat O'Brien for three consecutive seasons.

Over 300 live teleconferences/broadcasts for Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Sun Microsystems, AT&T, Cisco Systems, Oracle and Cadence, Gilead Sciences, PayPal, and AMD, among others.

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## **Awards & Accomplishments**

Telly Award, 2021 "Searching for Sequoyah" national PBS documentary feature.

Artist In Residence, UIUC, 2009 - Conducted a four-week video production lab as Artist in Residence at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

DuPont Columbia Award for Broadcast Journalism - "Bad Sugar" - Episode Producer/Director for PBS series Unnatural Causes: Is Society Making Us Sick? 2008

Bronze Telly Award - "Gathering Together" - Documentary Feature, 2008.

Indian Summer Festival Image Award - "Pulling Together" - Award of Distinction Documentary Feature, 2005

Indian Summer Festival Image Award - "Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions" Episode 6 "Ojibwemowin" - Spirit Award, Best of Festival 2004

Indian Summer Festival Image Award (2) "Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions" - Episode 1, "Gakina Awiiya: We Are All Related" - Award of Distinction Documentary Feature, 2004

NORCAL Regional Emmy Award - "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" - Best Directing 2002-2003

Indian Summer Festival Image Award - "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" - Award of Excellence, Best Documentary Feature 2003.

Telly Award - "Alcatraz Is Not An Island" - Documentary Feature, 2002

Taos Talking Pictures Festival - "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" - Land Grant Award Finalist 2001

American Indian Film Festival - "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" - Best Documentary Feature, 1999.

Midwest Regional Emmy Awards (2) - "Waasa-Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions" - WDSE-TV, Eleven nominations, five awards, including two in best documentary categories, 2003.

American Indian Film Festival - "Waasa-Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions" - WDSE-TV, Best Documentary Feature, 2002.

American Indian Film Festival (DP) - "Today Is a Good Day: Remembering Chief Dan George" - Best Documentary Feature, 1998

National Education Media Network (DP) - "We Hold the Rock" - Bronze Apple Award, Documentary Short, 1997.

National Park Service Award (DP) - "We Hold the Rock" - Best Exhibit Video, 1997

American Indian Film Festival (DP) - "Looks into the Night" - Best Live Short Drama, 1996, featuring Tantoo Cardinal.

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## **Additional Experience**

Democrat National Convention, Moscone Center, San Francisco, 1984 - Covered the DNC for the news department at KFJC Radio, Foothill College, Los Altos, CA. Interviewed politicians including Jessie Jackson, SF Mayor Diane Feinstein, VP Nominee Geraldine Ferraro, news anchor Ed Bradley and celebrity activists including Robin Williams among others.

Native American International Film Expo, Santa Fe, NM, 1997 - Participating filmmaker screening early version of "Alcatraz Is Not an Island", followed by audience Q&A. Conducted a video production workshop for Native high school students.

Producer/Director: "Alcatraz Occupation 30th Anniversary Celebration, 1999 - Partnering with the late Millie Ketcheshawno, we led a group of volunteers in the San Francisco Bay Area "Urban Indian" community to successfully fundraise and produce this historic event celebrating the 1969 American Indian occupation of Alcatraz Island. The event was held on the island required months of coordination with multiple entities including the NPS, GGNPRA, and the Press; and included reuniting many of the original student and non-student "Indians of All Tribes Veterans" including LaNada Means, John Trudell, Joe Bill, Denise Quitiquit, John White Fox, Grace Thorpe, Robert Free, Ed Castillo, Adam Nordwal, Ed Willie, Alan Miller and many others." Entertainment was provided by top acts from Indian country including Ulali, and Bad Dog Featuring John Trudell with special guest Jackson Browne.

PBS/WGBH Producers Academy Workshop, 2000 - Week-long series of workshops, lectures, and team exercises for emerging filmmakers at WGBH in Boston, MA.

Sundance Film Festival Alum, 2001 - "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" screened several times before sold-out audiences at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah after a special tribute to Executive Producer of the film, Millie Ketcheshawno, who suddenly passed away shortly before the festival started. Larry Cesspooch, Ute, provided the opening prayer and ceremony.

BANFF Television Festival, 2001 - Participating filmmaker on a discussion panel and screened "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" followed by audience Q&A.

IFP Market, NYC, 2001 - Participating filmmaker, sponsored by WGBH/PBS Fellowship for Emerging Filmmakers.

Community Outreach Campaign, 2001, 2002 - Embarked on a cross-country "tour" to screen "Alcatraz Is Not an Island" for tribal colleges such as Fond du Lac Tribal Community College, Lac du Flambeau Tribal College, and major universities including SFSU, USF, UC Berkeley, Stanford, Brown, ASU,

Syracuse, and University of Minnesota among others, whereby screenings were followed by panel discussions and Q&A sessions.

KQED-PBS Television, San Francisco, 2002 - Guest on local program featuring local documentary filmmakers promoting the national PBS premiere of "Alcatraz Is Not an Island," of which KQED was the presenting station along with ITVS.

IFP Market, NYC, 2003 - Participating filmmaker in the Independent Feature Project No Borders International Showcase pitching a proposed 90-minute documentary, "American Lynching: Strange and Bitter Fruit" to domestic and international documentary funding sources, broadcasters, and distributors.

Capilano College, Vancouver, B.C., 2004 - Conducted studio production workshop with emphasis on studio lighting for First Nation and Métis college students in coordination with Métis-Cree filmmaker Loretta Todd while filming a national HIV-AIDS awareness PSA for the Wabano Center for Aboriginal Health in Ottawa.

University of Minnesota, American Indian Studies Dept., 2005 - Native American Filmmaking Conference participating guest speaker as Writer and Associate Producer presenting several documentary works, including one of six episodes of the WDSE-TV PBS six hour, Emmy winning documentary series "Waasa Inaabidaa: We Look in All Directions".

Artist in Residence at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2009 - Conducted a four-week video production lab for the American Indian Studies Department course, *American Indian Stereotypes in Film*, and presented several of his documentaries for students and faculty.

Publications - Interviewed and featured in numerous publications and newspaper articles over a 25-plus year career.

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## **Personal**

Canadian citizen and a Canadian Status Indian - Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation (formerly The Ojibways of the Pic River)

I immigrated to the US at age 2 in 1964 and lived in Mooseheart, IL, "The Child City" orphanage about 90 minutes west of Chicago established by The Loyal Order of the Moose in the late 1800s. My father was a member of the Beardmore Moose Lodge in Ontario before he died in 1963.

Raised in Wheaton, IL from 1968 to 1983, and I'm included in the book "Wheaton 150: Yesterday Today Tomorrow" along with John and Jim Belushi, Bob Woodward and other notable celebrities.

Single, with one son, James "Jimmy" Walter, aged 30 who lives in Manhattan, NY and 2 stepsons I raised with my former spouse, Ellen Heath Blatchly-Fortier. My son's maternal great grandfather was the Sacramento born and prominent 1930s-1960s San Francisco artist Otis Oldfield, a WPA Coit Tower muralist and friend of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

